



## Base at home with EAF concept

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### KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M.

(AFPN) -- The Gunfighters of Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, begin their first on-call period June 1 as part of the expeditionary aerospace force.

The 366th Wing has a unique role in the EAF. It is one of only two aerospace expeditionary wings. The other is the 4th Fighter Wing, Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C., which recently completed its first on-call period.

So, what's the difference between an AEW and an aerospace expeditionary force? The key difference is an AEW is tasked to deploy at a moment's notice to any crisis worldwide and rotate on alternate 90-day on-call periods.

An AEF fulfills steady-state deployments such as Operations Southern/Northern Watch or peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, and rotates on 90-day on-call periods every 15 months.

To alleviate some of the stresses that can be associated with a constant 90-on, 90-off rotation period, the two AEWs will shift to a 120-day on/off cycle beginning in December, allowing for more stability.

"We're a 911 call for the nation," said Lt. Col. Charles Bowman, 366th Wing chief of plans, programs and evaluations, and the one whose job it is to get the wing ready to fulfill its on-call responsibilities. "When America needs to respond to a pop-up contingency somewhere in the world, the Gunfighters are ready to go."

Being ready to go means the ability to deploy jets and more than 1,000 people within 48 hours of



Members of the "Gunfighters" -- the 366th Wing, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho -- will embark on their first on-call deployment as part of the expeditionary aerospace force, June 1. (Photo by Senior Airman Harry Tiffany)



The 366th Wing is a composite wing consisting of F-16C/J Fighting Falcons, F-15C Eagles, F-15E Strike Eagles, B-1B Lancers and KC-135R Stratotankers. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Derek Harris)

being ordered and putting bombs on target shortly thereafter.

The 366th brings a built-in strength to the fight. The unit is a self-contained strike force that lives, trains and fights together. This composite wing has one mission and five different weapon systems to accomplish it: F-16C/J Fighting Falcons, F-15C Eagles, F-15E Strike Eagles, B-1B Lancers and KC-135R Stratotankers.

Supporting the mission are about 5,000 operators, logisticians, and medical and support people.

"When different people and squadrons from all over the world get together for an AEF deployment, it takes days or weeks to figure each other out," Bowman said. "We already have those relationships established and know how each does business. There is very little spin-up time when we arrive at a deployed location."

Getting the Gunfighters from central Idaho to a hot spot on a distant shore is no simple chore, but one they have been practicing and preparing for since the air intervention composite wing concept was developed and established following Operation Desert Storm.

"We train for rapid mobilization and have processes that can get the wing out of town very quickly," the colonel said. "Our maintainers know how to prep the jets and our personnel teams can get folks processed for deployment in just a matter of hours."

To get the initial force off the ground, a massive airlift force of 16 C-5s or C-17s is required, according to Bowman.

Having such a wide variety of logistical requirements does increase the 366th's airlift needs. However, he said, "We provide a unique combat capability to the warfighting commanders in chief."

To get spun up by June 1, the wing conducted quarterly deployment exercises. These two-week Gunfighter training camps involved flying composite sorties and setting up an expeditionary operations center, logistics, medical and other deployable support functions.

"We build an entire AEW task force from scratch at least four times per year," Bowman said. "This training allows us to go to any warm base to begin operations almost immediately." A warm base is a location that provides some degree of infrastructure, such as fuel, utilities, etc.

The Gunfighters also conduct training exercises with the Navy, according to the colonel.

Training with joint or combined services allows for a unique learning environment. "Each service or country has procedures that are different than ours. These joint exercises afford us the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with units that we might be called on to fight side-by-side with," Bowman said.

There are always lessons learned from previous deployments and exercises. Mountain Home hosted an AEW conference in April to incorporate lessons learned from AEW rotations. The conference covered expeditionary issues with Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command officials, along with B-2 bomber and F-117A fighter units that could be attached to the 366th Wing during a deployment.

The Gunfighters' focus on preparing for their first AEW rotation will bring innovation and

improvement to their and other units' future rotations under the EAF. (Courtesy of TIG Brief -- The official magazine of the Air Force Inspector General -- and contributions from Capt. James Law, 366th Wing Public Affairs)

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